

SAFETY ON THE LINE

A service of the NASA KSC Safety and Mission Assurance Directorate

March 2000 vol. 03

He Almost Died!



"Do not wait to strike until the iron is hot, but make it hot by striking".

- William Yeats (Irish Poet and dramatist)



In spite of our usually hectic lives, most of us follow a fairly set schedule, performing the same type of work each day. Occasionally, a little change can produce a situation that can have a large impact on employee safety. On January 25, 2000, an outside contractor at KSC was applying epoxy sealant in an enclosure in the VAB area. The employee disconnected his blast hood breathing air line from the compressor and moved to the south side of the unit. A co-worker then inadvertently reconnected the air line to a similar line which was interfaced to the facility GN2 system. The first employee rapidly became incoherent and collapsed. His co-workers immediately removed him from the enclosure and removed his blast hood where he regained consciousness. Investigation showed that the second contractor was using GN2 for a pressurized leak test on nearby equipment. Both the breathing air line and the GN2 lines were unmarked and found to have compatible 1/4" couplings.

How did this happen? This operation was found to be non-compliant with OSHA (29 CFR 1910.134) which requires breathing air couplings to be incompatible with outlets for non-respirable worksite air or other gas systems. This safety standard prevents asphyxiating gases from being introduced into breathing lines. This incident occurred because the contractor provided his own breathing air compressor and distribution system which was equipped with couplings compatible with the GN2 distribution system.

Be aware that **LATENT CONDITIONS**, which contributed to this incident, are existing conditions that may lower the system's defenses against completing your job tasks safely. So while performing your job: (1) Be Aware, (2) Question processes that don't seem "right", and (3) Watch Out for your fellow Coworkers.



Can you check this?

Are potentially hazardous operations assessed in the work area to identify the requirements for personnel protective equipment?

Area Safety Checklist # PP01



Do you have questions, comments, or an article you would like to submit? Contact Marguerite or Alan at 867-3473/4611, fax number 867-3583, mail code EC-H3 or e-mail them at "Safety on the Line" found in your global address list. Safety on the Line is also on the Web. Go to the KSC home page, then click on KSC internal page, then find us under NASA/KSC news.